THE WORLD.

NUMBER XXVII.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *July* the 5th, 1753.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

THE forming ſeparate ſocieties, in order to exerciſe the great duty of ſelf-mortification, ſeems to me to be one of the moſt general, and prevailing tendencies in human nature. For even in thoſe countries, where the freedom of the laws, or the ill execution of them, or the licentiouſneſs of manners, has given a ſort of public ſanction to a leſs ſevere diſcipline; in England itſelf, what numerous ſectaries have ſubſiſted upon this diſpoſition of the human mind!

IT is upon this principle that the various and oppoſite tenets of different ſyſtems are built. Mahomet, Confucius, and other religious law-givers; the founders of larger ſocieties,

ties, or ſmaller communities, have availed themſelves of this biaſs in the mind of man; which, at one time or other, is ſure to draw him with more than ordinary force.

If ambition occupies, if love monopolizes, if indolence ſtupifies, if literature amuſes, if pride expands, or humility condenſes the immortal ſpirit of man; if revenge animates, if a ſofter ſenſation mollifies, if trifles annihilate, if domeſtic cares engage, if dreſs and equipage poſſeſs the divine mind of woman; theſe paſſions will, ſooner or later, moſt certainly ſubſide in both, and give place to that impulſe, which begets various kinds of mortified communities in different climes and countries. Hence ſuch multitudes, in a neighbouring country, paſs the laſt periods of their lives in the monaſtic ſeverities of the ſtricteſt devotion; and hence it likewiſe is, that we ſee ſuch numbers in our own country, expoſe themſelves to midnight damps at Vauxhall, and to be preſſed to death by well-dreſſed mobs at routs.

Indeed, the more we conſider the human ſpecies, from the rude ſavage up to the moſt poliſhed courtier, the more we ſhall be perſuaded of this general tendency in our natures to acts of voluntary mortification.

But what puts this matter out of all doubt, is, the erection of three monasteries, within many of our memories, in the moſt conſpicuous parts of this great metropolis.

I hope your country proteſtant readers will not be too much alarmed; I can aſſure them that they pay no Peterpence. They are formed at preſent of ſocieties compoſed entirely of males; but we hope, it will not be long before they either open the arms of their communities for the reception of females, or that the ladies, excited

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by their example, and animated by the ſame principles, will form ſeminaries for their own ſex; and that ſome departing matron may be prevailed upon to found a charity for this purpoſe.

For the furtherance of ſo deſireable a community, it may not here be improper to offer a legal clauſe to be inſerted in any laſt will or teſtament; viz. "I, A. B. "ſpinſter or dowager, being tired of all men, and ha-"ving no mortal to whom I have reaſon to wiſh well; "having ſettled a competent proviſion on my birds, "dogs and cats, do leave the ſum of pounds, to-"wards the erecting a building, and the eſtabliſhing a "ſociety for the following purpoſes, &c. &c. &c."

Now as ſoon as a ſufficient number of holy ſiſters ſhall be collected, I think they cannot do more wiſely than to form their new ſeminary upon the model of one of thoſe three great MONASTERIES ſo lately founded; nor would I adviſe them to vary much from thoſe plans, as the difference of male and female will always be, to thoſe who contemplate things profoundly, a ſufficient badge of diſtinction.

For the direction, therefore, of theſe future lady abbeſſes, it will be neceſſary to give them ſome account of the three MONASTIC SOCIETIES before-mentioned; which will appear to owe their riſe entirely to that innate love of ſeparate clan-ſhip and ſelf-mortification, which, according to my preſent maxim, is univerſally implanted in the human breaſt.

There are few women of faſhion who have not heard of Harry the eighth; many of them are perfectly well acquainted with that glorious fountain from which the reformation firſt ſprung, which produced the diſſolution of papal monaſteries; till ſome years ago, a little round well-ſpoken man erected a large monaſtery near Covent-garden,

garden, where a brotherhood was ſoon formed. Here, he dealt out indulgencies of all ſorts, and extreme (good internal) unctions.

But it happened, from diverſe reaſons, that the aforeſaid diſtrict was not thought ſo proper a ſituation; upon which a new CONVENT was built, nearer the court-end of the town; the monks removed to it, and from that day, have taken upon themſelves the name of WHITE FRYARS.

The difficulty of being admitted into this pious ſeminary, and the neceſſary qualifications for that purpoſe are ſufficiently known. But how ſevere is their abſtinence! For whereas other devout orders in other countries do not ſcruple to indulge themſelves with the wholeſome diet of plain fiſh, vegetables and oil, it is the eſtabliſhed rule of this order, not to admit of any eatable, but what ſimple nature abhors; and till the texture of its parts is ſo totally tranſubſtantiated, that it cannot come under the denomination of fiſh, fleſh, or good red herring.

To ſuch a degree likewiſe has their ſpirit of mortification carried them, that being ſenſible that the moſt real indulgence, the moſt natural and homogenial beveridge to the conſtitution of man, is pure limpid element, they have therefore baniſhed that delightful liquid from their meals, and freely expoſe themſelves even to the moſt excruciating tortures, by daily ſwallowing certain potions of various kinds, the ill effects of which to the human body are well known; and for their farther pennance, they have adopted nauſeous medicinal waters, for their miſerable inky drink.

But it is in the dead time of the night, when the herd of ordinary mortals repoſe from their labours, that theſe devotees perform their greateſt acts of ſelf-ſeverity; for

for the conduct of which, they have three or four eſtabliſhed rituals, compoſed by the celebrated father Hoyle.

THIS famous ſeminary, like that of ſome colleges, is divided into ſenior and junior fellows. The juniors, to a certain number at a time, not content with their ordinary acts of probation, exert a moſt extraordinary effort of devotion.

IMAGINING that the mortification of the body alone, is not ſufficient, for the pious gratification of their exalted zeal; and conſidering how meritorious it would be to extend the ſame ſeverity to the faculties of the mind; they have attained ſuch a ſpiritual domination over the ſoul, as to be able to renounce all its moſt pleaſing emotions, and to give it up without remorſe, to be tortured by the moſt painful viciſſitudes of Hope and Fear. Such is the wonderful effect of long habit, unwearied exerciſe, and abſtracted vigils!

IN order to facilitate this toilſome pennance, and to enable themſelves totally to ſubdue all ideas whatſoever, which have no connection with thoſe two paſſions, they have contrived inceſſantly to toſs about two cubical figures, which are ſo deviſed, as to fix the attention by certain myſtical characters, to one or other of the aforeſaid paſſions: and thus they will ſit for many hours, with only the light of one large taper in the middle of the altar, in the moſt exquiſite and convulſive agonies of the moſt truly mortified and religious penitents. In ſhort, neither the Indian nor Chineſe bonzes, nor the Italian or Spaniſh viſionaries, in all their various diſtortions and pennances, come up to theſe. And here by the way, I cannot but remark with pleaſure, the great talents of my countrymen for carrying every thing they undertake to greater perfection than any other nation.

THE ſecond of theſe ſeminaries was founded upon the model of the firſt, and conſiſts of a number of GREY FRYARS, remarkable for a rigorous abſtinence,

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